

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
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O R 241810Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6506
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE
USUN NEW YORK 598
AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 3970

FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652 GHS
TAGS: PBOR, UK, GT, BH
SUBJ: MILITARY EXERCISES BY GUATEMALA

REF: DEPTTEL 146344

1. I WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN APPOINTMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
MOLINA TO EXECUTE INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL UNTIL THIS MORNING
AT 9:30, AS MINISTER WAS OUT OF TOWN IN ANTIGUA WITH
VISITING PERUVIAN FOREIGN MINISTER YESTERDAY AFTERNOON.

2. OPENED MEETING BY TELLING MOLINA THAT USG, LIKE GOG,
ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO FORTHCOMING BELIZE TALKS ON
JULY 6-7. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT BOTH PARTIES APPROACH
TALKS WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOOD FAITH OF OTHERIPARTY, AND
THAT IT FOLLOWED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AVOID
ANY ACTIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE MILITARY FIELD, WHICH
COULD BE MISINTERPRETED BY THE OTHER SIDE. FOREIGN MINISTER
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INTERRUPTED ME AT THIS POINT TO SAY HE WAS IN FULL AGREEMENT
AND THAT AS A MATTER OF FACT HE HAD REQUESTED BRITISH CONSUL
MCQUILLAN TO COME IN AND SEE HIM LATER THIS MORNING TO PROTEST
INTRUSION INTO GUATEMALAN AIR SPACE AT 11 AM YESTERDAY OF BRITISH
PUMA HELICOPTER WHICH FLEW OVER VILLAGE OF GRANO DE ORO IN
MOPAN RIVER AREA NEAR MELCHOR DE MENCOS. SOME GUATEMALAN
MILITARY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT IT AND HE, MOLINA, WOULD

HAVE TO REPORT TO PRESIDENT ON IT LATER IN THE MORNING TOGETHER WITH RESULTS OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH MCQUILLAN. GUATEMALAN FORCES HAD NOT ATTEMPTED TO SHOOT DOWN HELICOPTER BUT INCIDENTS SUCH AS THIS POSED RISKS AND NATURALLY INCREASED SUSPICIONS.

3. I REPLIED THAT WE HAD NOT HAD ANY INFORMATION ON REPORTED INCIDENT BUT THAT WE WERE GLAD TO HAVE GOG ACCOUNT OF IT WHICH I WOULD REPORT TO WASHINGTON IMMEDIATELY. I CONTINUED THAT IT WAS PRECISELY IN THIS CONTEXT OF MILITARY ACTIONS WHICH COULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD THAT I HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON TO RAISE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER THE CURRENT GOG MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE PETEN. WE FELT THAT THE SITUATION CREATED BY THE EXERCISES COULD THROUGH MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDING POISON THE ATMOSPHERE FOR THE TALKS AND POSSIBLY, PREJUDICE CHANCES OF FAVORABLE REACTION FROM THE BRITISH ON FOLLOWUP TO THE SECRETARY'S CONVERSATIONS WITH MOLINA AT GRENADA. STATE DEPARTMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON ON QUESTION OF GUATEMALAN MANEUVERS URGING UK NOT TO TAKE ANY REACTIVE MEASURES WHICH COULD RESULT IN A SHARP INCREASE IN TENSION. BY THE SAME TOKEN WE WISHED TO STRESS TO GOG THAT WE FELT IT MOST DESIRABLE FOR GUATEMALAN MANEUVERS TO BE HELD AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE FROM BOUNDARY LINE WITH BELIZE. IN THIS CONTEXT, PLACEMENT OF IMPORTANT MILITARY EQUIPMENT SUCH AS LOCATION OF ARMORED VEHICLES WHICH WERE NOW CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTEDLY AT LA POLVORA WAS ALSO A MATTER OF CONCERN, AND COULD LEAD TO MISUNDERSTANDING ON OTHER SIDE. WE HOPED THAT GOG WOULD APPRECIATE RISKS OF SITUATION AND FIND SOME WAY OF MAKING A GESTURE OR SIGNAL TO THE BRITISH, OR OTHERWISE COMMUNICATE THEIR GOOD INTENTIONS.

4. I STRESSED THAT AS GOOD FRIENDS OF BOTH COUNTRIES WE FELT THAT WE COULD SPEAK FRANKLY TO BOTH WHEN THE OCCASION AROSE AND THAT I HOPED GOG AND SPECIFICALLY PRESIDENT LAUGERUD WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT OUR MOTIVE IN RAISING THE QUESTION OF GUATEMALAN MANEUVERS AT THIS TIME WAS TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE MILITARY ESCALATION WHICH COULD IN ANY WAY JEOPARDIZE FORTHCOMING TALKS.

5. MOLINA ACCEPTED ALL OF THE FOREGOING IN MOST REASONABLE AND CALM MANNER FREQUENTLY NODDING AGREEMENT AND INDICATED THAT HE PERSONALLY AGREED THAT THERE COULD BE A DANGER OF MISINTERPRETATION BY HAVING MANEUVERS TOO CLOSE TO BOUNDARY AS WELL AS HAVING SIGNIFICANT MILITARY EQUIPMENT EMPLACED NEAR BORDER. HE SAID HE WOULD COMMUNICATE USG CONCERN TO PRESIDENT PERSONALLY LATER IN THE MORNING. FOREIGN MINISTER THEN INITIATED SOMEWHAT INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF SUBSTANCE

OF BELIZE ISSUE. PRINCIPAL POINTS HE MADE WERE: NECESSITY OF BRITISH TO RECOGNIZE NEED FOR TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENT; MINIMUM REQUIREMENT FOR GOG THAT DEMARCATION LINE BE DRAWN AT MOUTH OF MONKEY RIVER, AND DIFFICULTY OF SELLING EVEN THIS SOLUTION TO GUATEMALAN PUBLIC AND OBTAINING AMENDMENT TO GUATEMALAN CONSTITUTION TO RATIFY IT. SINCE I WAS UNAWARE OF ALL OF POINTS COVERED IN BILATERAL BETWEEN SECRETARY AND MOLINA I CONFINED MYSELF TO SAYING THAT IT WAS CLEAR THAT BOTH SIDES WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS IF AGREEMENT WERE TO BE REACHED. MOLINA EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH HIS TALK WITH SECRETARY AND THAT HE CONSIDERED THAT US HAD CRUCIAL ROLE IN FACILITATING PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

6. COMMENT: PREDICTABLY, MOLINA WAS APPROACHABLE, MODERATE, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND FRIENDLY AS HE ALWAYS IS. WE CANNOT BE SURE WHETHER REACTION OF LAUGERUD AND GUATEMALAN MILITARY WILL BE QUITE SO REASONABLE, OR WHETHER GOG WILL TAKE ANY ACTION IN RESPONSE TO OUR DEMARCHE. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAS MADE CLEAR IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS THAT HE IS FEELING QUITE RESENTFUL TOWARDS US AND JUST LAST NIGHT AT CEREMONY IN FRONT OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS AT WHICH HE RECEIVED DECORATION FROM PERUVIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, SPOKE EMOTIONALLY BOTH ABOUT UK'S "ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF BELIZE", AND ABOUT INSIDIOUS NEW INTERVENTIONISM AND COLONIALISM PRACTICED BY CERTAIN LARGE POWERS WHICH, NO LONGER CONTENT WITH CONTROLLING ECONOMIC RESOURCES OF SMALLER COUNTRIES, NOW WISH TO IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON HOW COUNTRIES RUN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

7. MOLINA DID NOT SPECIFICALLY RESPOND TO MY POINT ABOUT COMMUNICATING GOG REACTION TO THE BRITISH, BUT I TOLD HIM THAT AMBASSADOR BOSTER WOULD RETURN THIS AFTERNOON AT 3:30 AND THAT I WAS OF COURSE AVAILABLE TO SEE HIM AT ANY TIME BEFORE THEN.
ANDREWS

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